

**Opening Statement
Of
Chairman Henry J. Hyde**

**Full Committee Hearing
“Iraq: Update on U.S. Policy”**

**2172 Rayburn House Office Building
April 26, 2006**

The Committee will come to order.

The President’s Strategy for victory in Iraq will help Iraqis build a democratic, stable and prosperous country that will serve as a partner in the War Against Terrorism. The framework for success in Iraq comprises three tracks for improving the political, economic, and security interests of the transforming Iraqi state. Effective progress in these areas necessitates constructive interagency coordination.

For three years, the American and Iraqi people have made enormous sacrifices toward this objective. The loss of human life and the unexpected increasing financial obligations have placed a heavy burden on American citizens. For Iraqis, political deadlock and sectarian strife have had disastrous and painful consequences.

Despite these setbacks, the United States, with the cooperation of our allies, has engaged in dialogue and substantive reconstructive efforts with the Iraqi people to help build the foundation for establishing a secure and sovereign Iraq.

In the political realm, Iraqis have demonstrated their commitment to rebuilding a government by their overwhelming participation in three democratic elections. On December 15, more than 11 million Iraqis risked their lives and that of their families to participate in elections for a new government under Iraq's new constitution. The recent compromise by the Shi'ite United Iraqi Alliance to put forward Jawad al-Maliki as the nominee for Prime Minister, has potentially rescued the Iraqi political process. Notwithstanding their initial reluctance and opposition to the political reconstruction process, Arab Sunnis are slowly beginning to increase their participation. However, it remains to be seen if a broad and inclusive government will emerge, and more importantly, if this will be enough to satisfy the Sunni community's political ambitions.

The United States Government has committed itself to helping Iraq reduce its debt burden and encouraging the international community to provide increased assistance. Still, more action is required to enable a sustainable economy that can meet Iraq's needs over the long term.

In the security sector, approximately 250,000 Iraqi security forces have undergone training and are gradually taking on responsibility for areas under their control. The United States should explore all possible means of ensuring that these forces are both representative of the Iraqi population and fully integrated in order that they become a symbol of Iraq's sovereignty and contribute to Iraq's long-term stability.

However, there are significant challenges in our effort to help stabilize Iraq in the post-Saddam era.

A recent GAO study that discussed the challenges facing the United States and Iraqi governments in rebuilding Iraq found that the deteriorating security environment and the continuing strength of the insurgency have derailed stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

This reality poses a serious concern for the U.S. Congress as multi-billion dollar emergency funding legislation for the war effort is currently underway.

I hope to hear from our distinguished panel not only about the areas in which we are making progress, but also about where we are facing our biggest challenges and how we are working to resolve them efficiently from lessons learned.

We are fortunate to have Ambassador Jeffrey and Assistant Secretary Rodman here today to provide an update of the situation in Iraq and discuss where we go from here.

I will now yield to my friend and colleague, Ranking Democratic Member Tom Lantos, for any opening remarks he may wish to make.